

New Year butterfly sightings, 1999

On New Year's Day, 1999 Mr Ken Sharpe of Plough Drive, Colchester, Essex reported to me that a Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* (L.) had been fluttering around blooms of *Niburnum fragrans* in his garden on a day when the temperature reached 9°C. The specimen was in perfect condition and was watched for up to 30 minutes before flying off.

On 4 January, my wife Linda saw a Peacock butterfly *Inachis io* (L.) in our garden at West Bergholt, near Colchester on another day when there was sunshine and 10°C. After some exploratory flights round the borders it flew in the direction of evergreen shrubs, being twirled along by a very strong south-westerly wind.

To complete a trio of New Year sightings, this time of a more unusual early species, a Painted lady *Cynthia cardui* was seen by A.J. (Bob) and Stephen Dewick at Bradwell-on-Sea, Essex, on 6 January. Dougal Urquhart, senior ranger at the Essex County Council Cudmore Grove Country Park, East Mersea in coastal Essex, also reported to me a Painted Lady which was flying behind the sea wall in the park in sunshine after some warm and blustery south-westerly winds. The specimen was in bright and perfect condition and was assumed to be a recently arrived immigrant.—JOE FIRMIN, 55 Chapel Road, West Bergholt, Colchester, Essex CO6 3HZ.

Atomaria scutellaris Motschulsky (Col.: Cryptophagidae) at Porthcawl, Glamorgan

On a sunny afternoon during a weekend visit to Porthcawl on 1.iii.1997 a walk along the sea front brought me to an open area of mown grass between the road and the shore known as "The Green". Near its edge, where it drops some two or three metres to a rocky shoreline, were several flat stones. Turning these over revealed a number of beetles. One of these was a species of *Atomaria* which was unfamiliar to me. Later dissection showed it to be a male whose aedeagus appeared most similar to that of *A. scutellaris* Motschulsky figured by Sjöberg (1947, *Entom. Tidskr.*, **68**: fig. 45). Reference to Johnson (1993, *Provisional Atlas of Cryptophagidae – Atomariinae (Coleoptera) of Britain and Ireland*, I.T.E., Huntingdon, map 47) showed this species to have a distribution confined to two separate areas; a south-western group encompassing the Channel Islands, Scilly Isles and the extreme tip of Cornwall; and a southern group along the Sussex coast but also extending inland to Surrey. I sent the specimen to Colin Johnson who confirmed my provisional determination and commented that he was unaware of any other records from further north up the south-west peninsula. This would, therefore, appear to be the first record of *Atomaria scutellaris* from Wales.

The most numerous species of beetle taken with *A. scutellata* was the histerid *Kissiter minimus* (Aubé). Other more cosmopolitan Coleoptera present were *Amara aenea* (Deg.), *Harpalus affinis* (Schr.), *Tachyporus hypnorum* (F.), *T. pusillus* Gr., *Oxyptoda brachyptera* (Steph.), and larval *Lagria hirta* (L.).—R. COLIN WELCH, The Mathom House, Hemington, nr. Oundle, Peterborough PE8 5QJ.